

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KUALA 01720 180822Z

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6570

INFO AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUALA LUMPUR 1720

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR MARR ASEAN

SUBJ: WALL-STREET JOURNAL ARTICLE ON U.S. BASES IN THE
PHILIPPINES

REF: STATE 55608

SUMMARY: THE MALAYSIAN FOREIGN MINISTER HAD NOT SEEN THE
PRESS REPORTS OF MY TELEGRAM ON THE BASES, AND THEREFORE
WAS NOT DISTURBED ABOUT POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S.
POLICY. IN A GENERAL DISCUSSION OF THE HOLBROOKE
STATEMENT BEFORE THE WOLFF SUB-COMMITTEE, RITHAUDDEEN
SAW THE U.S. PRESENCE PLAYING A CONTINUING ROLE IN ASIAN
STABILITY, BUT FELT THAT GROUND TROOP WITHDRAWAL FROM
KOREA, AND IF NECESSARY, EVENTUAL WITHDRAWAL OF MILITARY
BASES FROM THE PHILIPPINES WOULD NOT BE DESTABILIZING IF
ACCOMPLISHED GRADUALLY AND AFTER CAREFUL PLANNING. GOM FAVORED
MOVES TOWARD NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WITH PRC AND SRV. THE
GOM SAW U.S. TRADE AND ECONOMIC POLICY AS THE MAJOR
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 KUALA 01720 180822Z

INDIRECT FACTOR CONTRIBUTING TO MALAYSIAN SECURITY.
END SUMMARY.

1. I MUST ADMIT I WAS SOMEWHAT TAKEN WITH THE THOUGHT
THAT PRESS ACCOUNTS OF MY CABLE ON THE PHILIPPINES BASES
WERE SENDING APPREHENSIVE CHILLS THROUGH ASEAN
CHANCELLERIES. I WAS BROUGHT SHARPLY BACK TO EARTH, HOWEVER,

WHEN THE MALAYSIAN FOREIGN MINISTER TENGKU AHMAD RITHAUDDEEN TOLD ME HE HAD SEEN NEITHER THE WALL STREET JOURNAL ARTICLE NOR THE AP STORY BASED ON IT, WHICH APPEARED IN MARCH 11TH STRAITS TIMES. SINCE THERE WERE NO FEARS OF AN IMPENDING NEGATIVE SHIFT IN U.S. ATTITUDES TOWARD SEA TO QUIET, I PRODUCED THE TEXT OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY HOLBROOKE'S STATEMENT BEFORE CONGRESSMAN WOJFF'S SUB-COMMITTEE, AND WE HAD A GENERAL DISCUSSION OF U.S. POLICY TOWARDS THE AREA.

2. WE DISCUSSED FIRST SEVERAL OF THE MAJOR POINTS IN THE OPENING SECTION OF POLICY GUIDELINES : EFFORTS TO NORMALIZE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE PRC AND VIETNAM; PHASE-OUT OUR GROUND FORCES IN KOREA; NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE PHILIPPINES ON THE USE OF BASES THERE. I ASKED THE FOREIGN MINISTER FOR HIS VIEWS.

3. TENGKU RITHAUDDEEN FAVORS STABILITY IN THE AREA. HE SEES OUR MILITARY PRESENCE IN KOREA AND ELSEWHERE IN THE WESTERN PACIFIC AS AN ELEMENT IN THIS STABILITY. HE FEELS THAT THE FOUR-FIVE YEAR PERIOD MENTIONED BY PRESIDENT CARTER FOR THE PHASE-OUT OF GROUND FORCES IN KOREA SHOULD BE ENOUGH TIME TO INSURE THAT THIS MOVE WILL NOT UPSET NORTHEAST ASIAN STQBILITY. HE FAVORS STEPS TOWARDS NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WITH CHINA AND VIETNAM. MALAYSIA, HE SAID, HAS BEEN SOMEWHAT AHEAD OF ITS ASEAN PARTNERS IN BELIEVING THAT THE SRV SHOULD BE DRAWN INTO A PRODUCTIVE AND HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE COUNTRIES OF ASEAN ON A BILATERAL BASIS, IF A MULTILATERAL BASIS IS NOT POSSIBLE. HE EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR OUR KEEPING THE GOM CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 KUALA 01720 180822Z

INFORMED OF OUR PLANS FOR THE WOODCOCK MISSION, AND SAID THAT HE SAW NO REASON FOR CONCERN THAT NORMALIZATION OF U.S.-SRV RELATIONS COULD ADVERSELY AFFECT U.S. RELATIONS WITH ASEAN.

4. ON THE PHILIPPINE BASES, RITHAUDDEEN SAID THAT UNDER THE KUALA LUMPUR DECLARATION, AND ZONE OF PEACE, FREEDOM AND NEUTRALITY, MALAYSIA LOOKS TO THE EVENTUAL WITHDRAWAL OF ALL FOREIGN BASES FROM THE AREA. IT WOULD HOWEVER SEE A RAPID WITHDRAWAL, SUCH AS TOOK PLACE IN THAILAND, AS TENDING TO UPSET THE EQUILIBRIUM IN THE AREA. IF IT SHOULD BE NECESSARY, HE WENT ON, A GRADUAL WITHDRAWAL OVER A FIVE YEAR PERIOD, FOR EXAMPLE, COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED WITHOUT ANY SERIOUS ADVERSE EFFECTS. BECAUSE OF MALAYSIA'S SUPPORT FOR THE PRINCIPLE OF EVENTUAL WITHDRAWAL OF ALL BASES, THE GOM COULD NOT PROPERLY TAKE ANY PUBLIC POSITION IN ADVOCATING A CONTINUING AMERICAN PRESENCE IN THE PHILIPPINES.

5. TURNING TO THE PORTION OF MR. HOLBROOKE'S STATEMENT

RELATING TO ECONOMIC AFFAIRS, THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAID THIS WAS AN AREA OF PARTICULAR INTEREST TO MALAYSIA. HIS COUNTRY HOPED THAT THE UNITED STATES WOULD BE RESPONSIVE IN THE AREA OF TRADE POLICY, COMMODITY STABILIZATION, AND TAXES THAT MIGHT IMPEDE INVESTMENT. AN EXPANDING ECONOMY AND A STABLE SOCIETY WERE ESSENTIAL FOR MALAYSIA TO MEET SUCCESSFULLY ITS PROBLEMS OF INTERNAL INSURGENCY. THE GOM EXPECTS NO DIRECT ASSISTANCE FROM THE U.S., BUT HOPES TO RECEIVE INDIRECT ASSISTANCE THROUGH U.S. COOPERATION IN THE ECONOMIC FIELD.

6. I NOTED THE STRESS ON HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS BEING PLACED BY PRESIDENT CARTER AND ALL OF HIS SENIOR FOREIGN POLICY ADVISERS. THE FOREIGN MINISTER ACKNOWLEDGED THIS POINT AND SAID HE HOPED IT WOULD NOT PUT UNDUE STRESS ON OUR RELATIONS WITH INDONESIA AND THE PHILIPPINES.

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PAGE 04 KUALA 01720 180822Z

7. COMMENT: THE FOREIGN MINISTER WAS SOMEWHAT MORE FORTHCOMING ON AN AMERICAN SECURITY ROLE THAN HE HAD BEEN IN OUR PREVIOUS MEETINGS. THE IMPORTANCE OF U.S. ECONOMIC POLICY, STRESSED WITH EQUAL FORCE IN HIS RECENT CONVERSATION WITH AN EGYPTIAN VISITOR (KUALA LUMPUR 1601) IS CONSISTENT WITH WHAT WE ARE HEARING AT EVERY LEVEL IN THE GOM.
UNDERHILL

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